Jackie Robinson

"A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives," this is a very true statement that Jackie Robinson said. He played a big part by changing many other black’s lives. He encouraged many blacks to follow in his footsteps, which was having the courage to break the color line in major league baseball and having a great athletic ability which still and will be revered by the game’s followers.

His courage and persistence helped his get by the hard times to the better times. He also relied on his mother’s strength, love, and attention. His keys to success were to not let all the racialism get to his head and make himself stop playing baseball, and he had the ability to stand up to injustice without compromising his personal integrity and beliefs. With those keys in mind, he never let verbal assaults get to him, from home and visitor games. He didn’t stop playing because other teams were after him and spiked him, but life threats probably did scare him, but didn’t let it get to his head. Once when he was to play in Cincinnati, he received a life threat that he shouldn’t come otherwise they would kill him.

The FBI investigated and nothing happened during the game. He continuously got hate mail and other threats like getting his baby kidnapped, but nothing actually happened. Many times fans yelled name at him, one time a game in Baltimore, Maryland many fans yelled racial slurs at him for nine straight innings. Many other incidents happened. At a game in Indiana he was pulled from a game because of a law prohibiting interracial athletes. During another game an opposing player threw a black cat onto the field and yelled at Robinson that the cat was his cousin. The worst behavior he ever heard from the crowd was when a torrent of mass hatred burst from the stands with every move he made and managed only one hit. During the time he was on the Royals, Jackie had suffered from nearly all white crowd in Louisville, but when the series went to Canada, that Canadians released a boo every time a Louisville player stepped up to bat. Jackie didn’t approve this retaliation, but felt a great sense of gratitude. The Royals went on to winning the Championship because of the crowd’s support. That was probably the only time Jackie was loved from the crowd.

This is probably the main reason Jackie Robinson is so famous, he was the first black to play in major league baseball and to be accepted, which encouraged other blacks to follow him. Branch Rickey should also be thanked, for letting Jackie be on the team and helping him get through the hard times. Branch Rickey, the Dodger’s president, told Jackie, “This is baseball’s great experiment.” Mr. Rickey made Jackie promise not to fight back or talk back, but instead shrug it off. After Mr. Rickey proposal Jackie Robinson responded, “If you want to take this gamble, I will promise you there with be no incident,” On April 15, 1947 he hit for a first time in major league baseball and did a very poor job, so people started questioning Jackie’s ability. After Jackie gained confidence, he started playing outstanding baseball. Many people, black and white, came to watch him play baseball, steal homes, and hit home runs. He got many people interested in baseball. The Dodgers won the National League pennant, and Jackie placed first in stolen bases, second in runs scored, and tied for first for home runs, 12. The newspapers, which doubted Jackie in the beginning, now said that “baseball’s great experiment” had been a great success. He did such an outstanding job, so the paper named him Rookie of the Year. Branch Rickey admired him because he kept all the tension in for two years.

“Robinson had performed his pioneering role with courage and dignity.” Now Rickey told Jackie that he was on his own and could speak his mind. “I can’t speak for 15 million people any more than any other person can, but I know that I’ve got too much invested for my wife and child and myself in the future in this country, and I and other Americans of many races and faiths have too much invested in our countries’ welfare, for any of us to throw away….. But that doesn’t mean we’re going to stop fighting race discrimination in this country until we’ve got it licked. It means we’re going to fight it all the harder because our stake in the future is so big.” Afterwards he became praised for his affirmation of American ideals and because of that he became a more popular player.

In 1949 Robinson showed his very best by finishing the season with a .342 hitting average, which was the highest in the league. He led the league in stolen bases, 37, and placed very high with many other records. He was nearly perfect defensively, like a vacuum cleaner sucking up ground balls at second base. His story became so famous that they made his life into a movie and make a Jackie Robinson watch. Now in major league baseball he has been accepted by most, but not all.

This is around the time he received a life threat, which was the 1950 season. During that year he finished with a .328 average for baseball, the best in National League. Whenever he was interviewed, he always told the truth and said very meaningful things, and he was and still is known as one of the most outspoken athletes of his generation. Many blacks followed after him, but still racism held many back. During the 1953 season he continued to be a star batter with a .329 average and scored 109 runs. After he continued to play many more fantastic games, but his body was beginning to slow down. In January of 1957 he retired from baseball. Jackie got into politics and in 1962 he became eligible for induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame which is the highest honor a baseball player can receive, he received it because he make a significant contribution to the game. He made his last public appearance at the ceremony at the Dodger Stadium to commemorate the 25th anniversary of his first major league season, his body was deteriorating, but he still walked across the field for the last time to watch his number retire, 42, on October 24, 1972. He left behind a legacy of great accomplishments, his amazing athletic ability and he was the pioneer for blacks to play major league baseball and he did it by having the courage to face the prejudice.